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15 January 2015

Stephen Munday
Executive Principal
The Voyager Academy
Mountsteven Avenue
Walton
Peterborough
PE4 6HX

Dear Mr Munday

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Voyager Academy

Following my visit with Kathleen Yates and Russell Ayling, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 13–14 January 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

The academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and the monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Peterborough.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2014.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve, their behaviour and how they present their work
 - all students receive high quality feedback about their work
 - academy policies are consistently applied in all classrooms
 - errors in literacy, especially punctuation, spelling and grammar, are corrected in all lessons.

- Improve achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 so that:
 - more-able students attain higher grades in GCSE examinations
 - students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make more rapid progress
 - the wide gap in attainment between students supported through the pupil premium and other students is closed.

- Urgently improve the standard of behaviour so that:
 - lessons are not disrupted, and learning occurs in a calm and orderly environment
 - students are respectful of one another and all staff
 - students arrive punctually to the academy and to all lessons
 - attendance at the academy and in lessons rises swiftly
 - the academy's revised behaviour code is adhered to consistently.

- Improve leadership and management so that:
 - senior leaders take responsibility for setting and maintaining high expectations of behaviour
 - senior leaders spend much more of their time ensuring that lessons are not disrupted and that incidences of poor behaviour are tackled swiftly
 - more is done to support and improve teaching throughout the academy
 - leaders at all levels, including governors, work collaboratively to bring about the necessary improvements.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 13 January 2015.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive and associate principals, other senior and middle leaders, four members of the governing body, two groups of students and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors investigated two complaints received by Ofsted relating to students' behaviour and safety.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection the number of students on roll has fallen slightly. One teacher has left the academy and another is on long-term sick leave. A new head of history has joined the academy. Specialist staff from the sponsor academy trust are working alongside staff in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and the special educational needs department to aid improvement.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Current data and lesson observations confirm that students in Key Stage 3 continue to make slow progress. New schemes of work provided by the sponsor academy trust have been implemented in some subjects to strengthen provision. However, no clear strategy is in place to improve students' literacy skills, or to provide them with regular, good quality support. Not enough support is provided in lessons for students that are disabled or have special educational needs. This limits their learning and progress. Most classes have a significant proportion of students whose first language is not English. Inspectors found that not enough is done to support their learning and progress.

In Key Stage 4, current predictions shows that the percentage of Year 11 students expected to attain five or more A* to C grades will be similar to last year. This year's percentage figure is restricted by the high proportion of students who sat GCSE examinations earlier in the key stage and underachieved. Based on their well below average starting points, current data suggests that most students should make sufficient progress in English. However, this is not the case in mathematics. The progress of students in Year 10 is less clear because it is not monitored in as much detail as it is in Year 11.

The academy is prioritising its efforts to ensure that Year 11 students are suitably prepared for GCSE examinations later this year. Those likely to attain A* to C grades in English and mathematics have been clearly identified and this information has been shared with all staff. There is an expectation that all staff will ensure that these students achieve well in their other subjects so that they do attain at least five A* to C grades, including in English and mathematics. More able students feel that staff

are providing additional help for them through regular testing, weekly revision classes and by acting as personal mentors to oversee how well they are doing. Senior leaders acknowledge the importance of ensuring that all Year 11 students engage fully in these revision and mentoring sessions if they are to achieve their target grades.

The quality of teaching

Observations of lessons, some carried out jointly with senior leaders revealed common weaknesses in teachers' planning. Most of them identify students' backgrounds and individual needs in their registers and assessment records, but not all of them use current assessment data to plan learning matched to their different needs. Consequently, less able students, those that have English as an additional language, and more able are all given the same tasks. This restricts their learning and progress because some struggle to understand what they need to do, and others finish work quickly and are left unchallenged. Inspectors saw very few examples of teaching assistants working alongside students. When asked, all students, including the most able, said they would like more support staff with them in their lessons.

Students' books show some improvement in marking but a minority of teachers still do not mark work often enough or check regularly that the quality of work is good enough. Those that do mark regularly usually provide students with good quality feedback to aid their improvement. Students' literacy skills remain underdeveloped because there are no common approaches to reinforcing it across all subjects. Common errors in literacy, spelling and grammar identified through teachers' marking are not followed up by students, so their work does not improve. Marking does not tackle poor quality presentation and incomplete work well enough. Not all teachers appreciate that students' books represent a clear indication of the quality of their teaching over time, and the expectations they have of their students.

Observations by inspectors noted that some of the recently qualified teachers that joined the academy last term are beginning to settle in, establish good relations with students and teach effectively. Staff training is on-going. A group of the academy's most effective teachers is mentoring colleagues and leading good practice.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Improved behaviour noted during the last monitoring inspection is still evident but senior leader recognise that much more needs to be done to make it securely good. Alternative arrangements are being made to educate a small minority of poorly behaved Year 11 students away from the academy site. More able students in higher sets feel that behaviour is generally good but those in lower sets say this is not the case in their classes. They feel that not all teachers manage students' behaviour well enough, and that these teachers allow low level disruption to regularly interrupt their

learning. Some students' casual attitudes towards learning are clearly evident in their lack of engagement during questioning and discussion, and in the poor quality presentation of their work.

Monitoring data shows that the proportions of students removed from lessons, or excluded from the academy are rising rather than falling, and remain far too high. Not enough use is made of this information to tackle the reasons why students misbehave in lessons and prevent them from being excluded from learning. For example, the proportion of students from East European backgrounds who are referred to the academy's inclusion room is high, but there is no strategy in place to support these students in lessons.

Routine monitoring and higher expectations of students have led to all of them wearing uniform and a significant reduction in lateness. The academy remains a calmer and safer place to be. When asked, students say that they feel safe but behaviour outside of lessons needs to be better than it currently is. Not all are confident that if they make staff aware of bullying issues, they will resolve them fully.

Inspectors investigated two complaints received about the management of behaviour and students' safety. Meetings were held with senior leaders and the Police. All staff were asked to approach an inspector if they had any concerns about the safety and welfare of students or themselves. No staff came forward. Inspectors did find that low level disruptive behaviour has not been eradicated and remains an important issue for improvement. No evidence was found to support other claims that students are unsafe or at risk of harm. Records of checks on adults' suitability to work with children and child protection procedures were also examined and found to be suitably maintained.

Overall attendance was low at the time of the last monitoring inspection and currently, it remains low. Significantly, the attendance of disadvantaged students is improving and fewer of them are being excluded from school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders have secured improvements, most notably to stabilising the academy by managing students' behaviour more effectively. Less progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching, or raising achievement. The rate of improvement is too slow and now needs accelerating if the academy is to be removed from special measures within the given timescale.

Decisive action has been taken to tackle some ineffective teaching, but at this stage too much teaching remains inadequate. Regular learning walks provide senior leaders with an overview of the quality of teaching. This information is not complemented by enough rigorous, formal lesson observations and thorough

scrutiny of students' books to identify what each member of staff does well and what they need to improve upon.

The academy's improvement plan is currently under review as much of it is out of date. This provides senior leaders with an ideal opportunity to thoroughly evaluate the progress made so far in securing improvements and to determine what else they need to prioritise to enable the removal of special measures.

An external review of how the Pupil Premium funding is spent to raise the achievement of disadvantaged students has taken place. An action plan is ready for implementation this term and a consultant from the sponsor academy trust has been appointed to lead and manage this task. The plan includes the recommendations made in the report but does not contain clear, numerical targets to measure how effectively the gaps in achievement between those eligible for funding and other students are closing.

Discussions with a group of subject leaders confirmed that increasingly, they are being held accountable for raising students' achievement. Expectations of them are higher. Revised targets have been set but some targets for improving GCSE results are too modest. Pastoral leaders are now expected to monitor the attendance and behaviour and students in their care. The Head of School for teaching and learning has oversight of the strategies to promote students' literacy and support students whose first language is not English. It is not clear at this stage which other staff will lead these strategies forward.

A thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of the student support and special educational needs department has been carried out. The action plan to improve it has not been implemented. Plans include deploying support staff much more effectively to work alongside students in need of additional support. A senior leader has been appointed from within the sponsor academy trust to improve this department.

An inner-strategy group of governors has formed to accelerate the rate of improvements made. They are using their knowledge and experience to challenge senior leaders to drive further improvement. Robust conversations between governors, the executive principal and the sponsor academy trust have taken place. Governors now request detailed reports on the actions taken to improve the academy. Their higher expectations of senior leaders and the trust are adding impetus and urgency to resolving the issues raised in the last inspection.

External support

Additional support brokered recently by the sponsor academy trust is aiding improvement by providing expert assistance in key subjects and in the student support department to help them increase their effectiveness. These procedures are new and have not yet lead to the significant improvement required to remove the academy from special measures.

The local authority continues to work collaboratively with the academy. Regular communication with senior leaders enables it to monitor how well it is doing, broker additional support to aid its improvement and foster links with other providers in the City.